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## Exploration and Discovery.

SAPH AND THE TELL-ES-SAFI.—We have traces in the Scriptures of a vanishing race of giants. So the spies called the Anakim who were seen at Hebron, Numb. 13:33. Og, the king of Bashan, is spoken of as “of the remnant of the giants,” Deut. 3:11. Goliath, whose height is given as “six cubits and a span,” is fully described in 1 Sam. 17:4-7. The terms Nephilim (Gen. 6:4), Rephaim (Gen. 14:5), Emim (Deut. 2:10), and Tzuzim (Gen. 14:5) indicate people of great stature. The general tradition that there had been an early race of gigantic stature appears in the *Iliad*, v, 302; Lucretius, ii, 1151; *Æneid*, xii, 900; Juvenal, xv, 69; Pliny, vii, 16, and Augustine’s *City of God*, xv, 9.

It is unnecessary here to dwell upon this subject or to refer to the cases in different periods of persons having a stature like that of Goliath; but Saph claims our brief attention on account of the work now going forward at the Tell-es-Safi under Dr. F. J. Bliss, of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

2 Sam. 21:18-22 gives an account of the giants encountered and slain by Israelites in their wars with the Philistines, and four are named, of whom one was called a brother of Goliath, and another was Saph, and they were all said to have been sons of the giant who was in Gath. The same account is given in 1 Chron. 20:4-8. In the former of these passages the name appears as שָׁפ, in the latter in perhaps a defective plural form as שָׁפִים. He belonged in Gath and was slain there.

Rev. Henry G. Tomkins writes in the *Quarterly Statement* of the Palestine Exploration Fund (October, 1886, p. 200): “The Arabic name means ‘the clear or bright mound.’ Close by we find Wady-es-Safi and Khurbet-es-Safi, the valley and ruin of Safi; and I think that, as in so many instances, this is really a proper name, and, if so, one of great interest, for then we have the very name of a great worthy of Gath still sprouting from the soil.”

Upon this Colonel Conder commented (*Quarterly Statement*, April, 1887, p. 104) as follows: “The derivation of Tell-es-Safi from Saph is very interesting. Safi is, however, spelt with *Sad* and Saph with

*Samech*, though, as I have before said, the *s* sounds in Syrian Arabic are not entirely distinguished, and, moreover, *Saph* is probably not a Semitic word."

The Tell is also known as *Alba Sperula* and *Blanche Garde* in the records of crusaders. Warren speaks of "the glittering white chalk cliff at the northwest angle."<sup>1</sup> Conder describes it as "a magnificent natural site, presenting on the north and west a white precipice of many hundred feet."<sup>2</sup> All writers agree that it marks the site of Gath.

The biblical mentions of Gath may be briefly gone over. It is named in Josh. 11:22 as one of three places, the others being Gaza and Ashdod, in which some of the Anakim were left after a general massacre of them. The captured ark was taken to Gath after it had been at Ashdod, 1 Sam. 5:8. Goliath belonged there, 1 Sam. 17:4, 23, 52. David fled to Achish, king of Gath, 1 Sam. 21:10, and remained there for some time, 1 Sam. 27:2, 3, 4, 11. He had six hundred men from Gath in his bodyguard, 2 Sam. 15:18. Thither fled the two servants of Shimei, and he went there after them in defiance of Solomon, 1 Kings 2:39. Hazael, king of Syria, took Gath and thence threatened Jerusalem, 2 Kings 12:17. It was strengthened by Rehoboam, 2 Chron. 11:8. Uzziah broke down its wall, 2 Chron. 26:6. It is also named in Am. 6:2 and Mic. 1:10. The omission of it from passages in Zeph. 2:4 and Zech. 9:5, 6, wherein the other great Philistine cities are named, leads to the belief that it had not been restored. Petri says that he found upon the mound pre-Israelite or early Jewish pottery, but no Greek or Roman remains.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Bliss is at work under a firman which includes the three Tells, Safi, Zakariya, and Judeiyideh. For reasons of health and convenience he has first worked upon the second of these, which lies five miles east of es-Safi and which may be the Azekah of Josh. 10:10; 1 Sam. 17:1; 2 Chron. 11:9, and Neh. 11:30. He has already found stone implements, others of iron and copper, a jar containing some eighty scarabs and beads, other Egyptian objects, and some coins.

The work at Tell-es-Safi will come next. There is a large Arab village on the Tell, but Dr. Bliss is planning at leisure to make a

<sup>1</sup> *Quart. Stat.*, 1871, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1875, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1890, p. 244.

thorough excavation without disturbing it. He should find many things which will enlighten us as to the metal workers, the Philistines.

THEODORE F. WRIGHT.

IN the February *Expository Times* Professor Sayce, writing from Egypt, says that the missionaries in Sidon have discovered a stone on which there are engraved statements which support the conjecture of Professor Ramsay in his new book, *Was Christ Born in Bethlehem?*, that there was a house census in Syria under Augustus. We shall look for the confirmation of this statement with great interest because of its bearing upon the census of Quirinius.